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Winners Chosen in Vacant Lot Competition

Lots of Possibility ideas earn \$38,000 in prize money

LOUISVILLE (April 25, 2014) – Mayor Greg Fischer today announced the four winners in the Lots of Possibility competition, which sought innovative citizen ideas for redeveloping vacant lots into productive community assets.

The top honors in the permanent use category went to the dyeScape project, which will cultivate plants to create dyes for natural textile production, and a proposal for building a Habitat for Humanity home for a graduate of the Family Scholar House program. In the temporary use category, the top picks are a project to create lavender herb beds for producing potpourri and oil of lavender, and a proposal for a Mediation Labyrinth that will provide a green space programmed for art, meditation and intergenerational community interactions.

Winners in the permanent use category each receive \$15,000 prizes and ownership of the vacant lot(s) they selected to implement their long-term plans. The temporary proposal winners receive \$4,000 and one-year, renewable leases to use the space until permanent development can happen.

“Vacant land is both a challenge and an opportunity for our city,” Fischer said. “The Lots of Possibility applicants brought us bold and creative ideas on how to transform these vacant lots into assets that advance sustainability and improve neighborhoods. The hope is that their ideas will have a ripple effect and inspire other creative and innovative uses.”

Lots of Possibility was launched earlier this year to seek community input on ways to take eligible vacant lots owned by the Louisville/Jefferson County Landbank Authority and the Urban Renewal Commission and put them into productive use. More than 100 applications were received from individuals and community groups, which were narrowed to 12 finalists.

Finalists then prepared detailed proposals that they presented to a panel of judges. The entries were evaluated based on their financial and technical feasibility, including strong implementation and maintenance plans, community benefit, creativity and ability to be replicated in other areas.

To learn more about the winning entries, read the descriptions below and click on the links to view their full proposals.

- [dye Scape](#) - 609 N. 17th St., 1655 Portland Ave. and 1657 Portland Ave. (Permanent Use)
Submitted by Colleen Clines and Maggie Clines with the Anchal Project and Louis Johnson. The urban textile landscape is a network of small-scale gardens that cultivate plant fibers, animal fibers and dye plants for the purpose of natural textile production. This site will demonstrate the potential of plants to provide natural color to materials, teach residents environmental sustainability and entrepreneurship and support local textile production.
- [Graduating to Homeownership](#) – 2926/8 Dumesnil Ave. (Permanent Use)
Submitted by Habitat for Humanity of Metro Louisville and the Family Scholar House (Rob Locke, Jackie Isaacs, and Harvetta Ray). Using Habitat for Humanity’s volunteer construction

model, a new energy efficient home will be constructed near the Parkland Family Scholar House (FSH) for a new graduate of the program. The FSH seeks to end the generational cycle of poverty through education, and by staying in the neighborhood, the graduate can continue to benefit from and provide benefit to the FSH community. A new program will also be created to provide financial counseling and application assistance to enable more families to qualify for a Habitat for Humanity home.

- [Lots of Lavender](#) – 816 S 7th St., 526 N 17th St., and 1811 Lytle St. (Interim Use)
Submitted by Christopher Head and oSha Shireman. Redirected rainwater, vegetated bioswales and French drains will be used to support lavender herb beds for decoration, potpourri and oil of lavender production. This pilot project also seeks to demonstrate the potential of low maintenance/low mow plantings for vacant lots across the city. This project will be conducted in partnership with the Kentucky YMCA Youth Association and I.D.E.A.S. 40203.
- [Meditation Labyrinth](#) - 3831 Hale Ave. (Interim Use)
Submitted by West Louisville Women's Coalition (Ramona Lindsey, Elmer Lucille Allen, Chenoweth Allen, Wilma Bethel, Robin Bray, Ellyn Crutcher, Beth Henson, Gwendolyn Kelly, Pam Newman, Tyra Oldham and Harvetta Ray). This project will create an intergenerational open space for art and creativity. Community arts outreach will be paired with a walking path made out of personalized clay pavers and chalkboard walls made from recycled wood pallets and natural seating.

Lots of Possibility is part of the city's broader strategy to reduce the more than 5,000 vacant properties that exist throughout the city, with a high concentration in West Louisville. The city is addressing the issue with a multi-pronged approach including working to strengthen state laws, expanding its neighborhood redevelopment and code enforcement activities, demolishing abandoned buildings, ramping up lien collection efforts against owners of blighted properties, and initiating foreclosures, which enables vacant properties to be sold at auction to a new owner.

The competition is a collaboration between the city's Department for Community Services and Revitalization (CSR), the Mayor's Innovation Delivery Team and Vision Louisville, with the prize money provided by a local foundation. CSR's VAP Response Team has made the redevelopment of the approximately 400 vacant lots and structures that it manages a top priority and is proactively working with citizens and developers who are interested in turning these lots into positive and productive use, ranging from side yards to agricultural, housing and commercial projects.

Special thanks to the following community leaders, architects, landscape architects and Metro Government staff who judged the competition: Kristin Booker, Booker Design Collaborative; Anne Filson, Filson and Rohrbacher and Faculty UK College of Design; Margaret Handmaker, Mayor's Innovation Delivery Team; Bob Keesaer, Metro Department of Planning and Design Services; Jim Mims, Metro Codes and Regulations; Patrick Piuma, Urban Design Studio; Ross Primmer, De Leon and Primmer Architecture Workshop; Bill Schreck, Mayor's Office, Director of VAP Initiatives, and Anthony Smith, Mayor's Office, Director for Safe Neighborhoods.

Full details about the competition, including all of the finalists' proposals, and Metro properties available for purchase can be found on the city's VAPStat website at <http://vapstat.louisvilleky.gov>.